



NATIONAL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

Making the Case for E-mentoring: Suggested Talking Points

What Is E-mentoring?

- ☐ Pairing of caring, committed adult with youth in need of non-judgmental, supportive adult.
- ☐ Structured relationship based on thoughtful matching of similar interests/backgrounds.
- ☐ Communication via secure email system that protects young person's privacy and safety.
- ☐ Focused on needs of mentored youth.
- ☐ Creates meaningful exchange for both mentor and mentee.
- ☐ Takes advantage of technology to counter barriers of time and distance.

How Is E-mentoring Accomplished?

- ☐ Adheres to *Elements of Effective Practice for E-mentoring*.
- ☐ Includes safeguards for both parties, including privacy, confidentiality, codes of conduct, safe Internet access, responsible screening of mentors, program oversight and options for troubleshooting problems for both mentors and mentees.
- ☐ Provides orientation for mentors and mentees to set relationship parameters, ground rules, expectations and commitments.
- ☐ Includes a youth-serving organization and mentor source to provide program management, oversight, monitoring and strategic plan to manage outcomes and accountability.

How Is E-mentoring Different from Face-to-Face Mentoring?

- ☐ Communication is not restricted by geographic proximity.
- ☐ Communication is not confined by the calendar or the clock.
 - (Face-to-face usually requires 3-4 hours/wk. X 12 months)

- ☐ Relationship building is not necessarily dependent upon mutually enjoyable activities (except for online activities that can be shared and/or taught).
- ☐ Communication requires some degree of literacy, familiarity with using email and willingness to talk about oneself frankly.
- ☐ Cultivates an appreciation for online culture and electronic communication.
- ☐ Commonalities of background or interest are more important in creating successful matches as these similarities are the fundamental basis for the relationship.

How Is E-mentoring Similar to Face-to-Face Mentoring?

- ☐ Ultimate goals are the same: a caring relationship that encourages learning, understanding, support, trust and growth.
- ☐ Mentors are screened with background checks by independent party.
- ☐ Youth are recruited for interest in and willingness to be mentored.
- ☐ Defined mentoring period is determined.
- ☐ Interactions are monitored through local agency or other partner organization.

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Who Benefits from E-mentoring?

Youth Who:

- ☐ Participate willingly and are committed to regular communication.

- ☐ Have an identifiable need (e.g., career or academic coaching, relationship development) or who may be at risk in some area of their lives.
- ☐ Have sufficient literacy skills to conduct text-based communication.
- ☐ Are sufficiently mature to talk about feelings, opinions, aspirations or fears.
- ☐ Have regular, reliable Internet access.

Mentors Who:

- ☐ Commit to regular, consistent communication over an extended period of time (e.g., one year).
- ☐ Understand their role and the boundaries of their relationship with the youth.
- ☐ Have strong motivation but irregular schedules or limited time to mentor.
- ☐ Have reliable Internet access and experience in an online environment.
- ☐ Are able to express feelings in a text-based environment.
- ☐ Are willing to learn from a younger person.

Why Not Rely Only on Traditional Mentoring?

- ☐ Time constraints prevent thousands of otherwise willing volunteers from traditional mentoring.
- ☐ Geography separates many willing mentors from youth who could benefit from their guidance.
- ☐ Thousands more youth are in need of mentors than can be matched in traditional programs.
- ☐ Traditional mentoring can be enhanced by additional communication through email.

Can E-mentoring Measure Up to the Quality Standards Expected in Traditional Mentoring?

- ☐ E-mentoring has the same obligations to participating youth as traditional mentoring. U E-mentoring programs have the same responsibility to adhere to best practice as traditional ones.
- ☐ Regularity of communication is prescribed, just as traditional programs have minimal meeting time requirements.

- ☐ E-mentoring relationships must be monitored as much as traditional ones (see below).

Why Do Mentoring Pairs Need a “Structured Program” When They Could Just E-mail Each Other?

- ☐ Just as in traditional programs, e-mentoring programs require:
 - Screening of mentors
 - Recruitment of suitably motivated youth
 - Protections for privacy and safety
 - Monitoring of email and relationships by responsible/accountable staff
 - Appropriate training and expectation setting
 - Ongoing support for both youth and mentors
 - Responsible ways to terminate non-productive relationships
- ☐ Reliable technology, Internet access and troubleshooting expertise must be provided for all e-mentoring participants.

Can E-mentoring Replace Traditional Mentoring?

- ☐ Not intended to replace traditional mentoring. Can provide alternative to face-to-face mentoring if traditional mentors not available in sufficient numbers.
- ☐ Can enrich traditional mentoring program by adding additional communication without additional meeting time.
- ☐ Can provide safe conversational space (and time to consider responses) for topics that might be difficult in person.
- ☐ Further development of e-mentoring could include actual curriculum for mentoring pairs to develop and enhance specific skills, e.g., technology, career exploration or academics.

What Technology Is Required for an E-mentoring Program?

- ☐ E-mail software that provides secure online environment.
- ☐ Server to host the software.
- ☐ E-mail access for mentors and mentees.
- ☐ Computer access for mentors and mentees.
- ☐ Technical support to manage the e-mentoring relationships.

How Can the Safety of Youth Be Protected In E-mentoring Programs?

- ☐ Conduct thorough screening of potential mentors.
- ☐ Adapt existing program safeguard measures to cyberspace. Establish good tracking procedures and monitor diligently. Use a secured email environment.
- ☐ Know and follow the law affecting youth service programs.
- ☐ Provide a coordinator who knows children at mentee site to advocate for children and help them solve problems.
- ☐ Provide a coordinator at mentor source site to supply information, technical assistance and mentoring oversight.

Is an E-mentoring Program More Expensive than a Traditional Program?

- ☐ Only limited data available (emerging mentoring model). Some evidence provided by:
 - Study by MENTOR/PPV (April 2000) shows average cost by program type as:
 - Community-based (17 sites) - \$1,369
 - School-based (16 sites) - \$567
 - E-mentoring (16 Digital Hero Campaign program sites) - \$409

What Specialized Training Is Necessary for E-mentoring Program Staff?

- ☐ Same training needed to adopt *Elements of Effective Practice* in any mentoring setting.
- ☐ Provide orientation on:
 - Goals and procedures in e-mentoring and format options for delivery.
 - Technical requirements.
 - Program features that predict success:
 - Appropriate recruitment targets (organizations, mentors and mentees).
 - Online safety measures (confidentiality, conduct codes, secure communications, etc.).
 - Diligent relationship monitoring and support.

- Technical and mentoring support.
- ☐ Foster awareness of the similarities between traditional and E-mentoring programs.

Is Managing an E-mentoring Program More Time Intensive than a Traditional Program?

- ☐ Foster No formal data available.
- ☐ Time demands at start-up depend on the structure and practices already in place.
- ☐ Once established, e-mentoring program should not be more demanding than traditional one.
- ☐ No (or few) face-to-face activities to plan.
- ☐ More follow-up with mentoring pairs on how relationship is progressing.
- ☐ Some mentor/mentee training can be done online.

What Evidence Do We Have That E-mentoring Works?

- ☐ Limited data available (emerging e-mentoring model)
- ☐ Considerable anecdotal evidence that e-mentoring benefits include:
 - Improved writing skills
 - Improved self-directed learning
 - Improved ability to become proactive learner
 - Improved self-awareness
 - Strong mentor retention data
 - Most e-mentees want to continue emailing the mentor after program ends
 - Majority of e-mentees would like to be re-matched if e-mentor were unavailable
 - Most mentees would recommend e-mentoring to a friend

What Rationales for E-mentoring Appeal to Corporations?

- ☐ Opportunity to:
 - Make significant contribution without interfering with employee work day

- Use technology to surmount time and distance
- Introduce mentoring to a broader range of employees
- Develop a relationship with a school for future corporate/school partnership
- Introduce youth to the workplace by building in workplace visits
- Easy, non-threatening way to begin mentoring for organization that has no mentoring experience.
- Frequently becomes the first link to developing a traditional, structured mentoring program.
- Adds to the menu of choices corporations can offer employees for volunteer opportunities.

What Kind of Technical Assistance Is Available to Programs that Use *Mentors Online*?

- Program support
 - Online support at MENTOR's E-mentoring Clearinghouse: <http://www.mentoring.org/emc>
 - Consultation from MENTOR program staff
- Technical support
 - Technical support on software questions via a web-based message board from TechSoup, a technology web site for nonprofits for software questions. Response from technical staff will be posted on the same board within 24 hours.

What Are Some Barriers to Successful E-mentoring?

- Failure to set mentor/mentee expectations very clearly at the outset.
- Lack of technological or troubleshooting competency.
- Inadequate access to computers/Internet time for youth.
- Lack of ongoing relationship monitoring, support, and program management.
- Lack of consistent communication between mentoring partners.
- No contingency plans in case of staff turnover.

- ☐ Failure to implement specific policies and procedures for ensuring youth safety, terminating unsatisfactory mentors or mentees, or concluding satisfactory matches.

Why Might *Mentors Online* Be Preferable to Another E-mentoring Model or Software?

- ☐ Tool Kit incorporates all of the tools needed for a successful e-mentoring program without “reinventing the wheel.”
- ☐ Specialized software guarantees a secure online environment.
- ☐ Software is free. Only cost is \$100 license application fee.
- ☐ Access to the Tool Kit is limited to those organizations that can demonstrate mentoring best practices and technical readiness for E-mentoring.
- ☐ Tool Kit includes archiving and administrative tools for managing the program.
- ☐ Resources provided with the Tool Kit include online training, program and technical staff guides and online matching questionnaires.

How Can I Evaluate My E-mentoring Program Results?

- ☐ Same tools as a traditional program, e.g.
 - Pre- and post-surveys
 - Focus groups with mentors and mentees
 - Individual interviews with site and program coordinators
 - Individual interviews with mentors
- ☐ *What ‘s Working? Tools for Evaluating Your Mentoring Program* (recommended)
 - Tool developed by Rebecca N. Saito, Ph.D. for the Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota and MENTOR National Mentoring Partnership, and published by Search Institute, 2001. Purchase through the Search website: <http://www.searchinstitute.org>
Licensees for Mentors Online will receive a complimentary copy.

What Works in E-mentoring?

- ☐ Pilot programs with e-mentoring indicate authentic connections can be made between mentoring pairs if communication is regular, open, and consistent and deals with issues important to youth.

- Failure of either party to correspond regularly will hinder relationship development as trust needs time to grow; trust is the basis for meaningful relationship.
- Most critical characteristics of successful mentoring outcomes for youth are all achievable through e-mentoring:
 - Strongly youth-centered relationships
 - Emotionally engaged relationships
 - Minimal disappointments (for youth) related to relationship
- Successful matches are more dependent upon common interests or common background as the sole source of conversation since pair (in most cases) will not be sharing activities to spur conversation.